

The Sailors' Snug Harbor
Richmond Terrace
New Brighton
New York
Richmond County
New York

HABS No. NY-5473

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5473

THE SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR

Address: Richmond Terrace, between Tysen Avenue and Delafield Place, New Brighton, New York, Richmond County, New York

Present Owner: The Trustees of The Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of New York.

Present Occupant: The Sailors' Snug Harbor.

Present Use: Home for elderly sailors.

Statement of Significance: The Sailors' Snug Harbor, a home for aged seamen opened in 1833, occupies a spacious site on Staten Island overlooking the Kill Van Kull which leads into New York Harbor. Buildings on the property range from an outstanding group of five Greek Revival dormitory and administration buildings through to a twentieth-century theater and recreation hall. The various structures provide a particularly rich catalog of nineteenth-century architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following information is extracted from records in the County Clerk's Office, St. George (Staten Island), New York.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
6/20/1831 Liber T, pp. 144-49	Isaac R. Houseman Judith	Sailors' Snug Harbor (Trustees of)
5/7/1835 Liber Y, page 55.	Isaac Soria et al	Sailors' Snug Harbor (Trustees of)

In the Address Delivered at the Laying of the Corner Stone of the New Chapel by W.W. Phillips, published in 1855, the author gives the following account concerning the purchase of the property:

In May, 1831, the Trustees purchased this farm, containing 130 acres of land, for \$10,000. Subsequently they purchased 21 acres, with a water privilege, which had originally been a part of this farm, but had been

sold, and was used for manufacturing purposes, and was about to pass into other hands; the price paid for this was \$6,000. These two parcels of land now constitute the farm of the Sailors' Snug Harbor.

2. History of the institution: The Sailors' Snug Harbor was established "for the purpose of maintaining and supporting aged, decrepit and worn-out sailors" under the will of Captain Robert Richard Randall, who died in June, 1801. The income of the property of Randall's estate, located in downtown Manhattan, has supported the institution from the time of its founding to the present day.

On February 6, 1806, the Trustees of The Sailors' Snug Harbor were incorporated by the New York State Legislature; but it was not until March, 1830, that the last suit against the Trustees was settled. The "Annual Report of the Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor" for 1830 noted that

The Trustees being thus relieved from litigation, are zealously engaged in fixing upon a suitable site for the purpose of erecting the Asylum, and carrying into effect the intentions of the donor.

This "Annual Report" also included the following disbursements relating to the selection of a site for the institution:

1830

June 3	To cash	paid expenses of the committee in two visits to Staten-Island, examining situations for a site for Asylum . . .	\$ 9.15
June 12	" "	paid Vanderbelt for use of steamboat taking the Trustees to Staten-Island and passages back	13.00
July 28	To cash	paid expenses of the board of trustees on visiting the site recommended by committee for the Asylum	40.25
Aug. 18	" "	paid expenses of the committee to Barton and Morris Plains .	4.13

The purchase of a Staten Island farm by the Trustees from Isaac R. and Judith Houseman was recorded on June 20, 1831. On May 14, 1831, the New-York Evening Post published the following article:

The Trustees of the "Sailors Snug Harbour" have purchased Mr. Houseman's farm on Staten Island,

consisting of about one hundred and thirty acres, intended as the location for a hospital for superannuated seamen, accommodations for fifty of whom are to be erected immediately. The farm is situated near the entrance of the Kills; and the site selected for the buildings commands a good view of this city and harbour, of the town of Brooklyn, and of whatever passes in or out of the port.

On October 11, 1831, the cornerstone of the first building was laid, and the institution was formally opened on August 1, 1833. From 1839 to 1841 a "wing" to the west of this central building was constructed, and from 1840 to 1841 a "wing" to the east was constructed. A large building program which included the chapel, a wash house, and a dining hall to the rear of the original building, was under way in 1855, when the New York Daily Times reported of Sailors' Snug Harbor:

It is worth now \$1,500,000. Upwards of \$80,000 of expense is being laid out in new buildings and sundry improvements. There are 300 seamen fed, lodged, clothed, and cared for generally.

In 1869 the Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York noted that

This Asylum is devoted to the maintenance and support of aged, decrepit, and worn-out sailors, and accommodates from 400 to 450 inmates.

The Copy of the Last Will and Testament of the Late Robert Richard Randall, Esq., published in 1876, described the buildings of the institution at that time:

The public buildings of the Snug Harbor on Staten Island consist at present of a centre or main building, with two wings, a dining-hall building, a hospital and chapel. An additional building for the accommodation of inmates, also a kitchen, are now being erected.

In October, 1879, History of The Sailors' Snug Harbor, Together With Incidents of a Life In It for 18 Months, Written by an Inmate was published. The following excerpt describes the buildings at that time:

The buildings of the Snug Harbor on Staten Island consist, at present of seven edifices, which with the addition of another now in contemplation, will make eight, all of which are connected together by bridges and corridors, forming and resembling a mammoth hotel, the access to each building can be gained by any one without any exposure to the inclemency of the weather. There is also a chapel, hospital, a dwelling

for the Chaplain, Physician, Governor and Steward, all of which are separate buildings; also a dwelling for the Matron, and cottages for the Engineer and Farmer. A machine and carpenter's shop, a building for laundry purposes, and an extensive barn, with a piggery attached for the accomodation of the cattle and swines, all of which are encircled by a large iron fence. There is also a large cemetery or burial plot . . .

An article entitled "The Sailors' Snug Harbor" by Mrs. R. F. Woodward which appeared in Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly in January, 1895, indicates the growth of the institution by that date:

In the beginning there were but three buildings, which are to-day the central ones in the main group of five. Now there are over sixty. The first church has been succeeded by a grand new one; with a fine music hall, seating nearly a thousand people; a hospital with beds for two hundred patients; handsome residences for the governor, chaplain, physician, engineer, matron, steward, farmer, baker, and a building for each branch of labor required in the management of this miniature city.

On October 14, 1965, the five dormitory and administration buildings facing Richmond Terrace (Buildings A,B,C,D, and E) and the chapel were designated historic landmarks by the Landmarks Preservation Commission of New York City.

3. Important old views:

- a. Print published in Copy of the Will and Testament of the the Late Rob't Richard Randall, Esq. . . . New York: Published by Order of the Trustees, 1842. (See HABS photocopy).
- b. In a scrapbook entitled "Views, New York City. Richmond County" there are two views--one from the east, one from the northeast. Local History Room, New-York Public Library.
- c. Photograph of dormitory facades. Negative 21023A, Map and Print Room, New-York Historical Society.
- d. Print of "Bird's-Eye View, Of Sailors Snug Harbor, N.Y., A.M. Pettit." Staten Island Historical Society.
- e. Three photographs of dormitory facades, dated "c. 1890." Staten Island Historical Society.

B. Bibliography:

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Map of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York. From Surveys Under the Direction of H.F. Walling, 1859.

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"The Sailors' Snug Harbor," The Independent, LXV (November 26, 1908), 1217-21.

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"Sailors Snug Harbor," New-York Evening Post, October 29, 1831, p. 2.

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Prepared by Diana S. Waite
Architectural Historian
June, 1968

Addendum To

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ADDENDUM
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National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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Data pages 1 through 7 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 8.

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LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-101L NORTH FACADE, CENTRAL PAVILION

LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-101R * NORTH FACADE, CENTRAL PAVILION

Left and right overlap: 80%

LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-102L NORTH FACADE, CENTRAL PAVILION

LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-102R * NORTH FACADE, CENTRAL PAVILION

Left and right overlap: 80%
(Shares survey control with 101L & 101R)

SAILOR'S SNUG HARBOR
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Data (Page 9)

LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-103L	NORTH FACADE, EAST PORTION
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-103R *	NORTH FACADE, EAST PORTION
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-104L	NORTH FACADE--WEST END
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-104R *	NORTH FACADE--WEST END--CONVERGENT
	104L and 104R (convergent) overlap: 95%
	104L and 104R overlap: 85%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-105L	ANGLED VIEW FROM NW
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-105R *	ANGLED VIEW FROM NW
	Left and right overlap: 85%
	(Shares control with 106L and 106R)
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-106L *	ANGLED VIEW FROM NW
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-106R	ANGLED VIEW FROM NW
	Left and right overlap: 85%
	(Shares survey control with 105L and 105R)
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-107L	WEST FACADE, CENTRAL BAY
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-107R *	WEST FACADE, CENTRAL BAY
	Left and right overlap: 80%
	(Shares survey control with 108L and 108R)
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-108L *	WEST FACADE, CENTRAL BAY
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-108R	WEST FACADE, CENTRAL BAY
	Left and right overlap: 80%
	(Shares survey control with 107L and 107R)

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LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-109L *	LOOKING EAST, GRAZING NORTH FACADE
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-109R	LOOKING EAST, GRAZING NORTH FACADE
	Left and right overlap: 90%
	(Shares survey control with 110L and 110R)
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-110L *	LOOKING EAST, GRAZING NORTH FACADE
LC-HABS-GS05-T-4491-110R	LOOKING EAST, GRAZING NORTH FACADE
	Left and right overlap: 90%
	(Shares survey control with 109L and 109R)

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